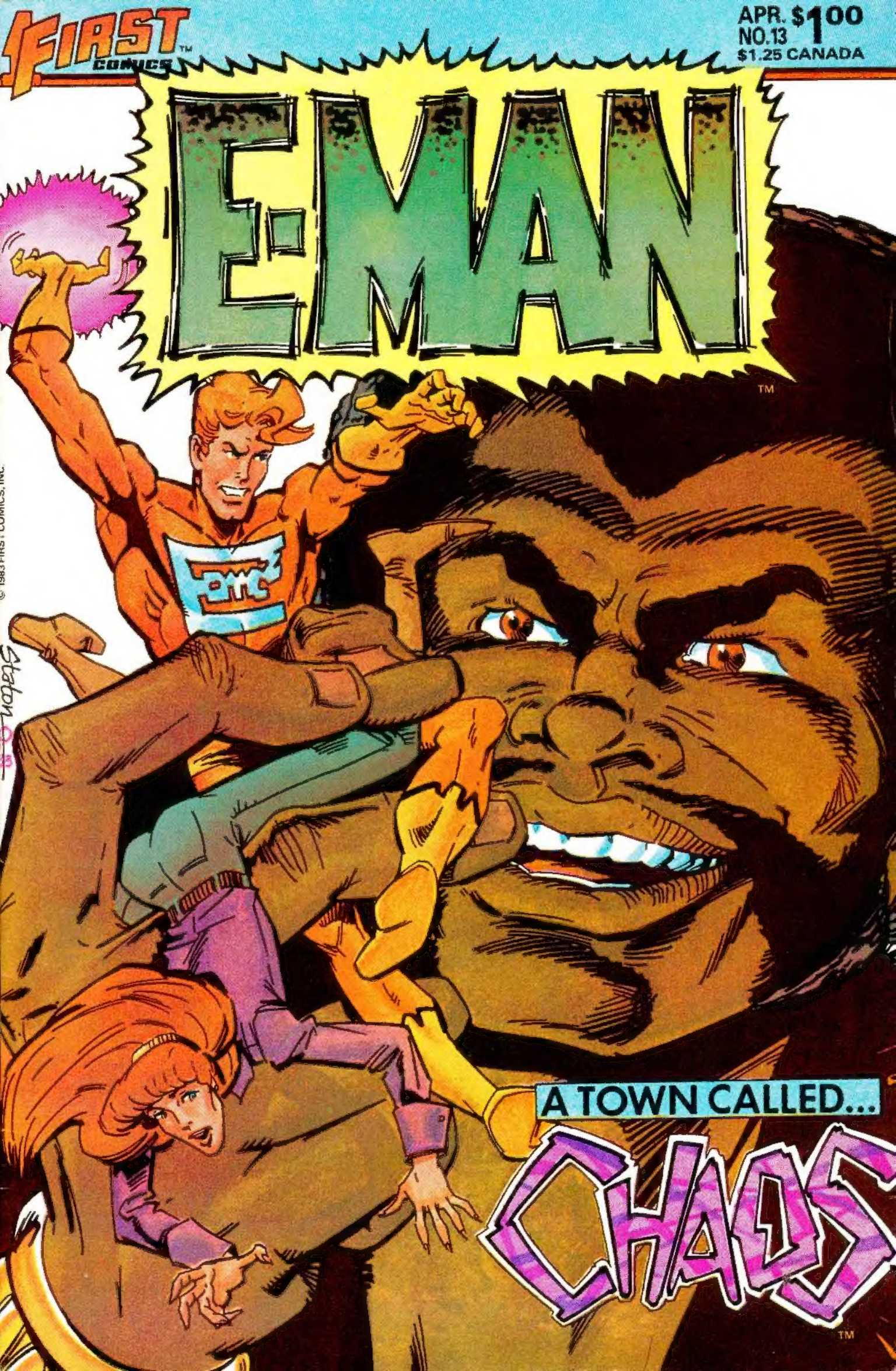
FIRST™ COMICS
APR. $1.00
NO.13
$1.25 CANADA

E-MAN™



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Stanton 83

A TOWN CALLED... CHAOS™

%FIRST COMICS,
1014 DAVIS STREET,
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS
60201

Dear First,

I think you made several mistakes in your revival of E-Man. With the monthly schedule, Staton won't (probably) be able to handle the full art job for a long time ... that's part of it. Without Cuti scripting, maybe you shouldn't have brought back the strip at all. (*Did* you bring it back? As fans remembered/loved it?)

James R. Babb
Huntington, WV

Is **E-Man** *finally back? I don't know, but I'd say a strong character is worth reviving if he/she is treated with respect and affection.*

Dear Mike and Joe,

When I started reading First Comics' E-Man I (literally) laughed out loud. Now Staton has deep-sixed Einstein's ghost, had Mike Mauser shoot down a man, had Mauser shoot a gun from the hand of Tyger Lili (golly gee, just like the Lone Ranger) and generally screwed up what was once my favorite comic.

I'm asking you (please) get a writer to work on E-Man!!!! Joe Staton is a *great* artist — but let's face it, the man could not write his way out of a paper bag even if someone gave him a sharp pencil.

T.E. Pouncey
1651 Kenmar
Wichita, KS 67208

Whatever's good enough for Clayton Moore is good enough for me. Seriously, if you'll check out Nick Cuti's old Vengeance Squad stories with Mauser, you'll see that Mauser's normal way of dealing with a problem is to shoot something.

Dear E-Persons,

I was sorry to read in #9 that Mr. Pasko will leave after #10, but I am relieved to know that Mr. Staton, who until now had just wowed us with his art, can now wow us with both his art and his writing. Issue #9 was great

It's too bad Nova doesn't have her powers anymore, as I think E-Person needs someone to understand his problems with his powers. Why not have them reappear off and on when she least expects them?

George E. Williams, Jr.
1145 Tamarack Ave.
Carlsbad, CA 92008

Funny you should mention that about Nova and her powers. You might want to check out issue #14 for a development on that front.

Dear Joe,

I'm one of the really *old* E-Man fans. I really *wanted* to love First's E-Man, wanted to be thrilled with every new issue, but I wasn't. It *could* be (but I seriously doubt it) sour grapes or misguided nostalgia, but it just wasn't the same character. The fault was with Marty Pasko's scripts. Although I admit he's a fine story teller, it seems that he had the misguided idea that *more* words made a story not only better, but something other than a humble ol' funny book. The humor was labored and heavy-handed. The Peter Pan quality was gone, replaced by sour cynicism.

Then came E-Man #9. I was looking *forward* to your script, Joe, anxious that it be as marvelous as something from the original run, but I can't describe the joy I felt when I found it *was*. Alec Tronn eating Chinese food, turning into all sorts of interesting things, and people (the only reason why our Alec wears a male form is to please Nova), and the lovely, totally on-target parody of Frank Miller and his Ronin. This is E-Man!

Now all you have to do is get Nova to act like a person again, and have Teddy Q. do something other than stand around and stare. Give *him* energy powers, if Nova doesn't want hers.

S.A. Bennett
687 Merton Ave.
Akron, OH 44306

Would you believe Captain Koala? Kid Quantas? I will count myself entirely successful as both a writer and an artist if I produce nothing more than a "humble ol' funny book," and I sincerely thank you for understanding that.

Dear Joe and Gang,

I read in CBG that Joe was going to do his own script on E-Man #9. I had expectations of a more feeling, fun read, as in days of yore, not the cross, helter-skelter literary experience it had come to be And I picked up the much-awaited ninth issue and found my expectations correct!! Many congratulations.

And so I am asking you, Joe, to stay on as scripter, too. Without you, E-Man will go back to being just a shell, an exercise in clumsiness that only early adolescents could find appealing.

I'd like to point out that my feelings on this are so strong as to have driven me to write to a comic book for the first time in my thirty-eight years.

Ron Lanyi, PhD
907 Colby Dr.
Davis, CA 95616

Well, it's about time.

NEXT MONTH: In Chicago, Alec and Nova face the machinations of Randarr the inexplicable. Back in New York, Mike Mauser has big problems of his own.

— Joe Staton

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E-MAN ™ COMICS, Vol. 1, No. 13, April 1984. Published by FIRST COMICS, INC., Mike Gold, President; Rick Obadiah, Secretary; Richard Felber, Treasurer; Kenneth F Levin and Ralph C. Musicant, Directors. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 1014 Davis Street, Evanston, IL 60201. Published monthly. Copyright © 1983 First Comics, Inc. All rights reserved. Price: $1.00 in the U.S., $1.25 in Canada. Subscription rates for twelve issues: $12.00 in the U.S., $14.00 in Canada, and $29.00 foreign rate. All payments must be in U.S. funds. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this publication are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, without satiric content are intended or should be inferred. E-Man, Alec Tronn, Nova Kane, Michael Mauser, Teddy Q., and all prominent characters featured in this issue are trademarks of First Comics, Inc. Printed in the U.S.A. by World Color Press. Engraved by Post Graphics. Unless your name is Post Master, don't read the next bit Application to mail at second class postage rates is pending at Evanston, Illinois, 60204. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to E-Man, c/o First Comics, Inc., 1014 Davis St., Evanston, IL 60201.

A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

E-MAN

CREATED BY NICOLA CUTI! JOE STATON

TM

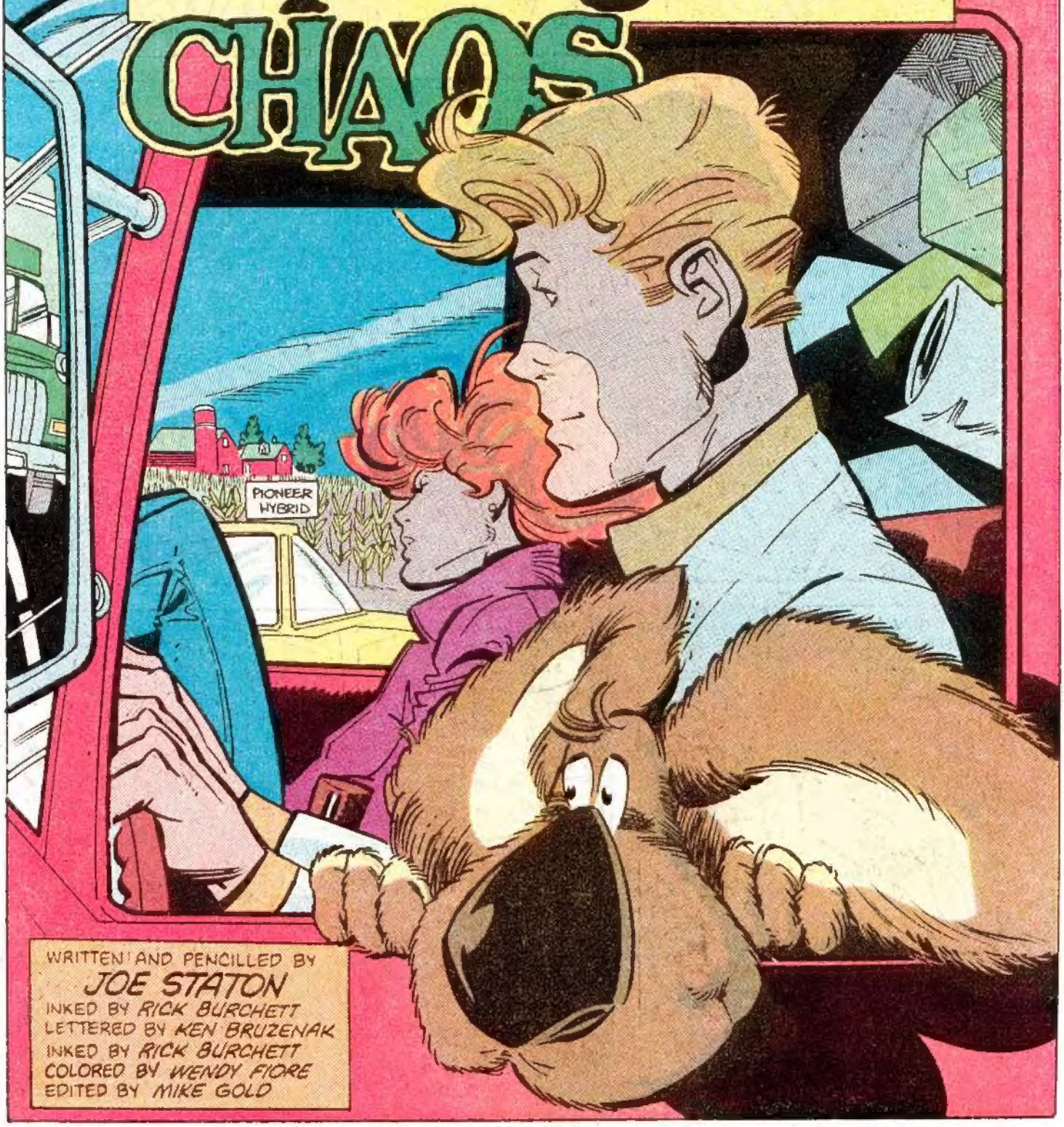
NEW YORK IS FAR BEHIND THEM...

...AND SOMEWHERE IN INDIANA, E-MAN--ALIAS ALEC TRONN--IS LEARNING THE MONOTONY OF THE ROAD.

BESIDE HIM SLEEPS NOVA KANE, ON HER WAY TO CHICAGO AND A NEW CAREER AS A TV PERSONALITY.

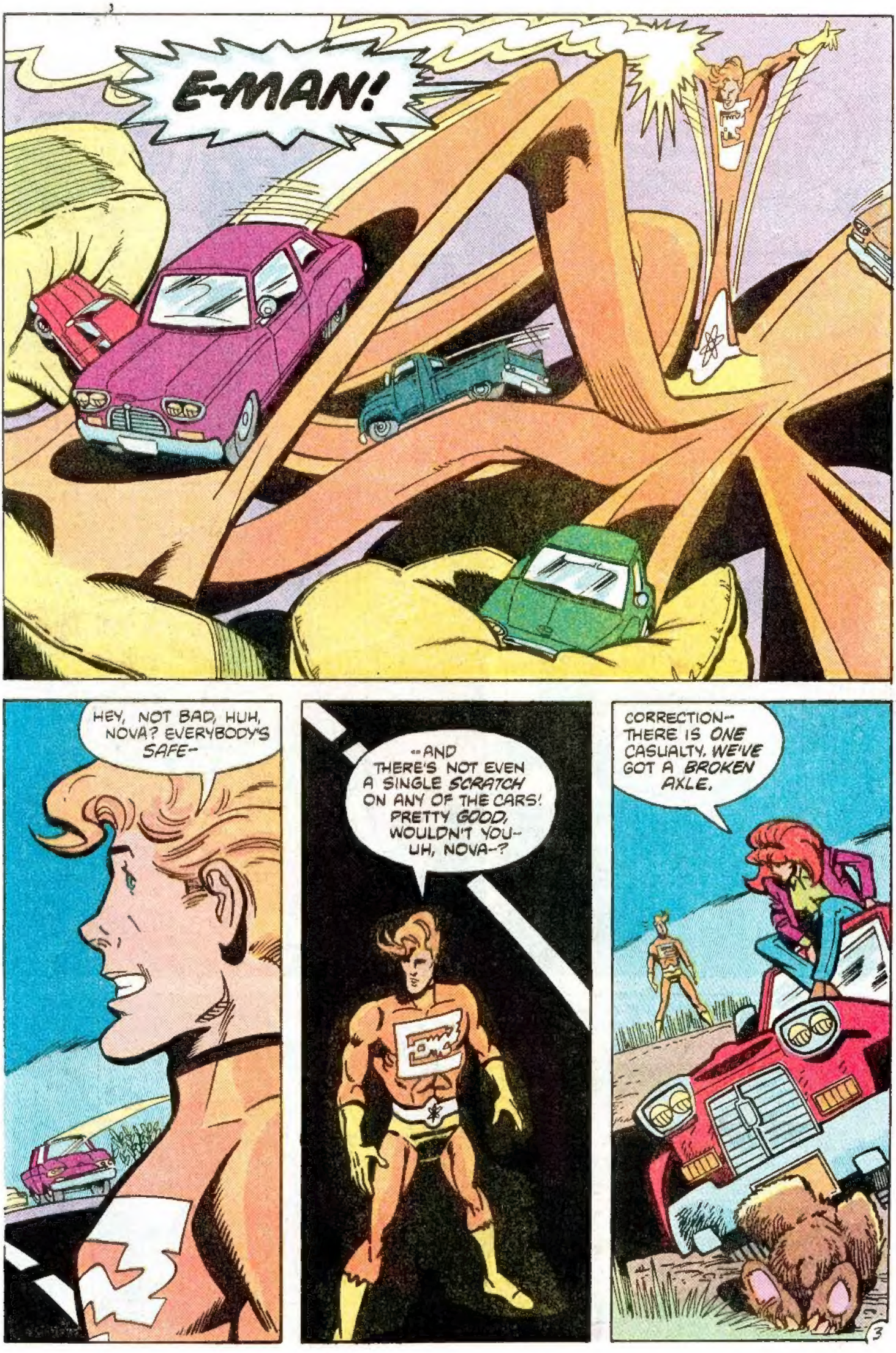
BUT FIRST, THEY'LL BE MAKING AN UNSCHEDULED STOP AT...

A TOWN CALLED... CHAOS



WRITTEN AND PENCILLED BY
JOE STATON
INKED BY RICK BURCHETT
LETTERED BY KEN BRUZENAK
INKED BY RICK BURCHETT
COLORED BY WENDY FIORE
EDITED BY MIKE GOLD

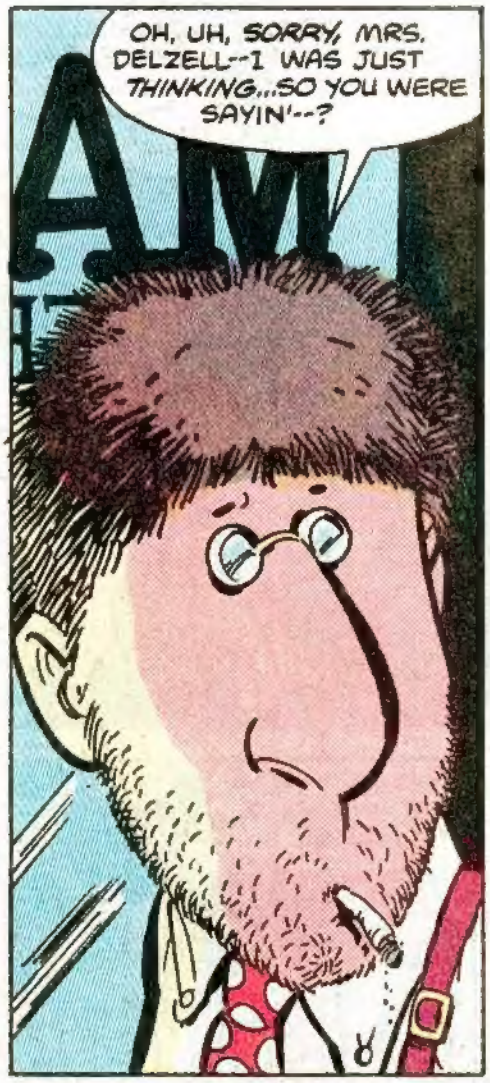
I COULD HAVE FLOWN NOVA TO CHICAGO IN SECONDS BUT SHE WANTED TO BRING ALL THIS STUFF!
AT LEAST SHE TRUSTS ME TO DRIVE HER JEEP.
I WOULDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO...
YIPE!
THAT GUY IS LURCHING ALL OVER THE ROAD!
UH-OH! NOVA, GRAB THE WHEEL!
ACE
IT'S TIME FOR...
WHA..?


E-MAN!
HEY, NOT BAD, HUH, NOVA? EVERYBODY'S SAFE-
--AND THERE'S NOT EVEN A SINGLE SCRATCH ON ANY OF THE CARS! PRETTY GOOD, WOULDN'T YOU-- UH, NOVA--?
CORRECTION-- THERE IS ONE CASUALTY. WE'VE GOT A BROKEN AXLE.
3

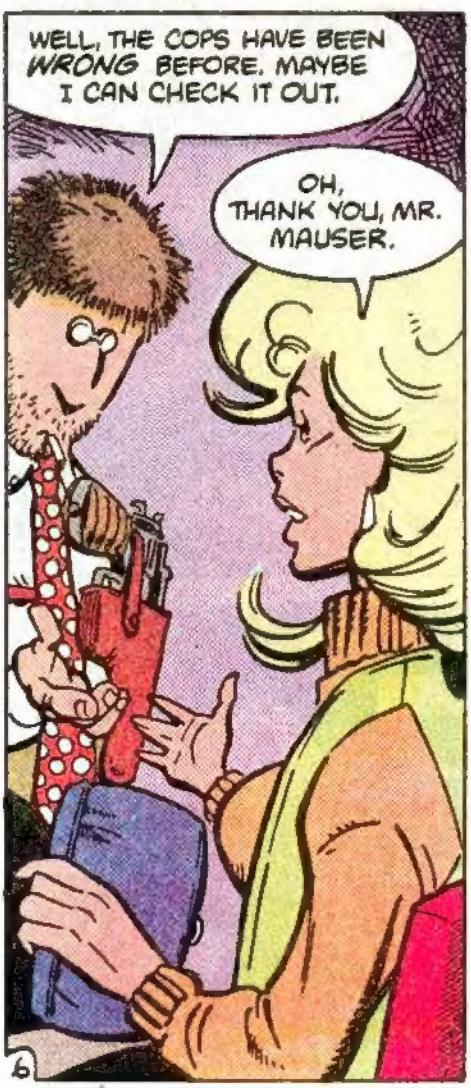
DIDN'T THAT DRIVING SCHOOL TEACH YOU NOT TO LEAVE THE CAR WHILE YOU'RE DRIVING?
I'M SORRY, NOVA. I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT YOU LIKE THAT. I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED...
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, BIG FELLA. I'M OKAY, AND WE'LL GET THE JEEP FIXED.
AT LEAST THERE'S A GARAGE IN THIS TOWN...
AND IT'S OPEN!
MAC'S GARAGE
Coke
YES... YOU... HAVE... A... BROKEN... AXLE...
GOTTA GET TO WORK! GONNA FIX 'ER RIGHT UP! NO TIME TO TALK NOW! LOTSA WORK TO DO! GOTTA GET RIGHT ON THIS BABY, YOU BET!
BOY, THEY SURE GROW 'EM WEIRD OUT HERE IN CORN COUNTRY.
WELL, HE SAID EVERYTHING WOULD BE READY IN THE MORNING.
MAC'S GARAGE
MAC'S GARAGE
I HOPE SO...LET'S FIND A MOTEL AND SOMEPLACE TO EAT.
SEED

DIDN'T YA SEE THE SIGN, HONEY?
NO SHIRT, NO SHOES, NO SERVICE!
HE DOESN'T NEED SHOES... HE'S FROM AUSTRALIA.
MOTEL
OH, THAT'S OKAY, THEN.
I'LL HAVE THE TUNA SALAD PLATE.
AND A BOWL OF CORNFLAKES FOR ME AND MY FRIEND.
Menu
ALEC, THERE'S SOMETHING VERY ODD ABOUT MY TUNA SALAD PLATE...
WE RESERE TH RIGHT TO REFU SERVICE TO
EXCEPT BOILED CAT
IT REALLY IS A TUNA SALAD PLATE!
THESE CORNFLAKES ARE KIND OF STRANGE, TOO...
?
THE PEOPLE IN THIS TOWN ARE TERMINALLY BIZARRE. I'LL SURE BE GLAD TO GET OUT OF HERE TOMORROW!
ICE
!
5

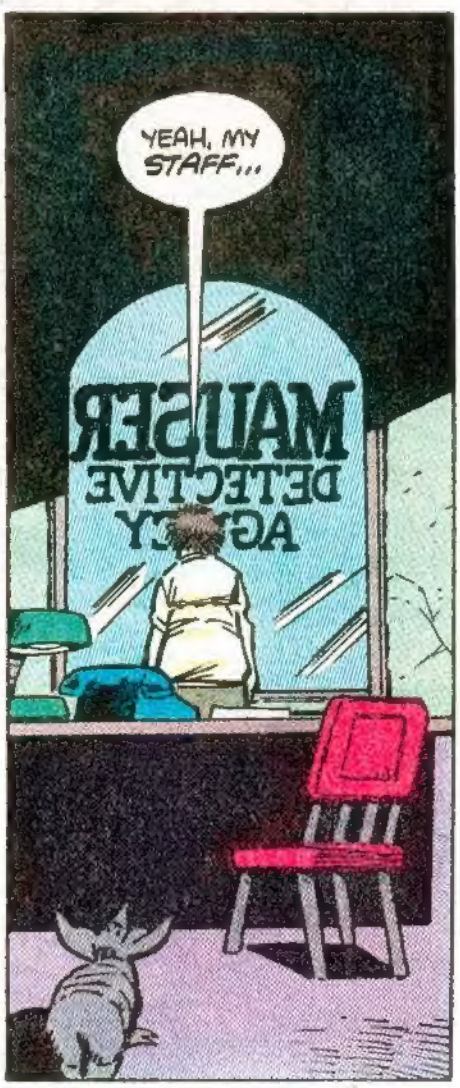
NEW YORK CITY. THE OFFICES OF THE MICHAEL MAUSER DETECTIVE AGENCY.
MR. MAUSER-?
Flo's
MAUSER
DETECTIVE AGENCY
CREDIT
DENTIST


OH, UH, SORRY, MRS. DELZELL--I WAS JUST THINKING...SO YOU WERE SAYIN'--?

MY HUSBAND WAS TERRIFIED OF HANDGUNS. HE WOULD NEVER HAVE SHOT HIMSELF!
BUT THE COPS SAY HE DID HUH?


WELL, THE COPS HAVE BEEN WRONG BEFORE. MAYBE I CAN CHECK IT OUT.
OH, THANK YOU, MR. MAUSER.

CALL ME MIKE.
THANK YOU AGAIN... MIKE.
I'LL GET MY STAFF RIGHT ON IT.


YEAH, MY STAFF...
MAUSER
DETECTIVE AGENCY

FIRST NOTES

THE FIRST GRAPHIC NOVEL

During our hectic convention season — which started last spring and, as far as I can tell, has yet to end — the one question people kept asking me was "When is First Comics going to do a graphic novel?"

Generally, I replied, "When we have a story that's worthy of the format." It's my feeling that the majority of so-called graphic novels published in the past year or so were merely long comic book stories — the type of stories that we, back in the mid-1960s, used to call "annuals." Better paper, better color, and better printing, but the story itself was hardly worth $5.95.

Then **Jerry Bingham** tossed **Beowulf** on my lap.

Beowulf, for the uninitiated, is the epic poem written (it is believed) in the eighth century. It served as the inspiration for a whole *genre* of heroic fiction — Conan, for example. **Beowulf** is referred to as a classic — and it is just that, in both the historic and the aesthetic sense.

Bingham adapted the poem with an enthusiasm and a sense of history so far unseen in the comics medium. The artwork is not only the best in Jerry's career — it is among the very best stuff I've seen in my ten years in the comics business.

(Yeah, I know, when everybody hypes their latest product, they always say, "This is the best!" But *I* rarely succumb to such hyperbole — at least, not in this column — and, after all, the graphic novel is going on sale next month so you can flip through it and see for yourself.)

The story meets my basic criterion for a graphic *novel*: it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. As noted, it also meets my second criterion: stunning artwork, aided in no small way by letterer/calligrapher **Ken Bruzenak** — letterer on **American Flagg!, Jon Sable-Freelance, Warp,** and **E-Man.** A fantastic letterer and a swell guy.

Quite frankly, First Comics wasn't going to get into the graphic novel field until this spring — until Jerry showed us **Beowulf.** Then we pulled out all the stops.

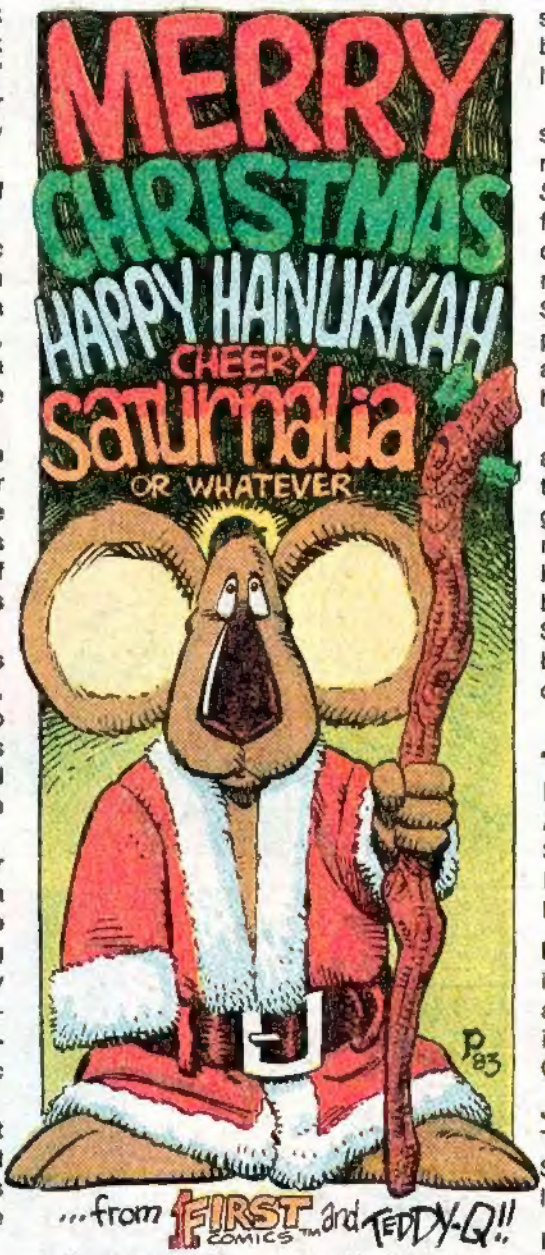
So we delayed introduction of our next monthly and pushed ahead our graphic novel plans. And if you pick up on a massive feeling of pride while reading this little editorial, well, you're not reading anything in, believe me.

Beowulf — First Comics' first graphic novel. Out there in January. Check it out.

FAMILY ALBUM

It's been a while since we've exposed ourselves to you (no, that didn't come out exactly the way I intended, but the word processor is broken and I'm on deadline) ... so ...

We have two people to welcome to First Comics. Those of you who read the indicia on our inside front-cover (we have the funniest indicia in comics, at least since Marvel cancelled Crazy) no doubt noticed a new name: **Ralph C. Musicant,** our operations director. Ralph is a graduate of The Harvard Law School



and a former professor at Northwestern University's business school here in Evanston; he's also been a director of First Comics since our inception. Ralph will be lending his vast experience to the administrative side of the company — no doubt you've already noticed the onslaught of First Comics-related merchandising items — and he's letting us play with Gandolf, his gargantuan sweetheart of a dog. I'll bet First is the only comic book company with a water bowl on the floor next to the office refrigerator.

And it is with great love that we welcome **Benjamin Webster Truman** to both our offices and, for that matter, to the world. Benjamin is the product of (no doubt you've already guessed) **Timothy** and **Beth Truman,** and he was born September 22nd, only a week or two past deadline.

Timothy tells us Benjamin has huge, strong hands and will be inking backgrounds on Grimjack before too long.

Media stuff: Bruce Patterson and I had some great fun on Chicago's Saturday monster movie matinee, the far-famed *Son of Svengoolie* — possibly the funniest show on the tube, both off-camera and on. And, yess, we were doing research for **E-Man.** Turns out both Svengoolie (comedian Rich Koz) and producer Joe Oher are both comics fans and fans of First Comics. No wonder we had fun.

And the third-ever Lord Cumulus, actor Keith Szarabajka (the man who took the part to Broadway) is back on the great stage in another comics-oriented role, that of B.D. in the Doonesbury play. Keith's the second Warp actor to make it big on Broadway — Andre' (Xander) Du Shields starred in the original versions of both *The Wiz* and *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Best of luck in the helmut, Keith!

— Mike Gold

FIRST IN DECEMBER

American Flagg! #7: Beginning — The State of the Union. Meet Luthor Ironheart, Flagg's new ... partner? **Howard Chaykin** provides the action.

E-Man #13: E-Man takes on Prince Chaos in First's first cross-over ever! **Joe Staton** and **Rick Burchett,** writer/penciller and inker respectively, set the story in Cynosure ... and in Indiana?

Jon Sable, Freelance #11: Introducing The Cat — the thief out to defeat Jon Sable — after she steals his heart! The latest **Mike Grell** creation.

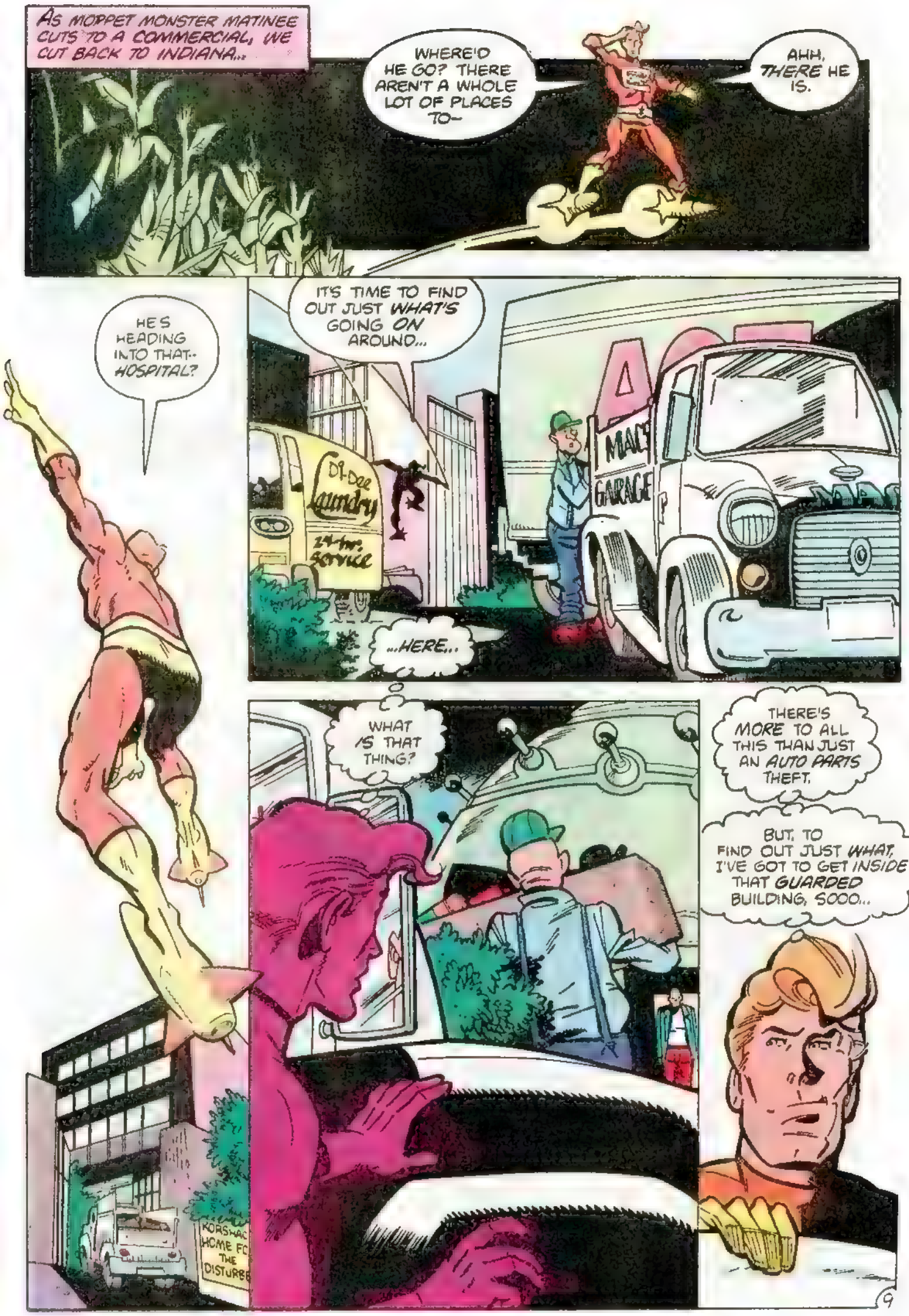
Mars #4: The title sez it all: Dead Artists And Talking Dinosaurs! Plus the Black Flame in Nightmare Tapestry.

Starslayer #15: **John Ostrander** already named the lead Prey ... although **Timothy Truman** thought "Torin of the Apes" might be more appropriate! Plus: Grimjack!

Warp #12: Chaos is taking over Cynosure! Lord Cumulus wants to get back with Mary Louise! Sargon leaves Fen-Ra! And Symax returns!

THE NEXT MORNING.
GEE, NOVA, HOW COME WE'RE LEAVING SO EARLY?
I GUESS I'M JUST NOT USED TO MAIDS TRYING TO MAKE THE BED WHILE I'M STILL IN IT.
MOTEL
I HOPE THE JEEP IS READY-- LOOK OUT!
VROOOOOOOOOM!
HMM... HIS TRUCK WAS FULL OF CAR PARTS...
AND THE ONLY THING I SAW IN THERE LAST NIGHT WAS...
MY JEEP!
DON'T WORRY. I'LL JUST CATCH HIM AND FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON!

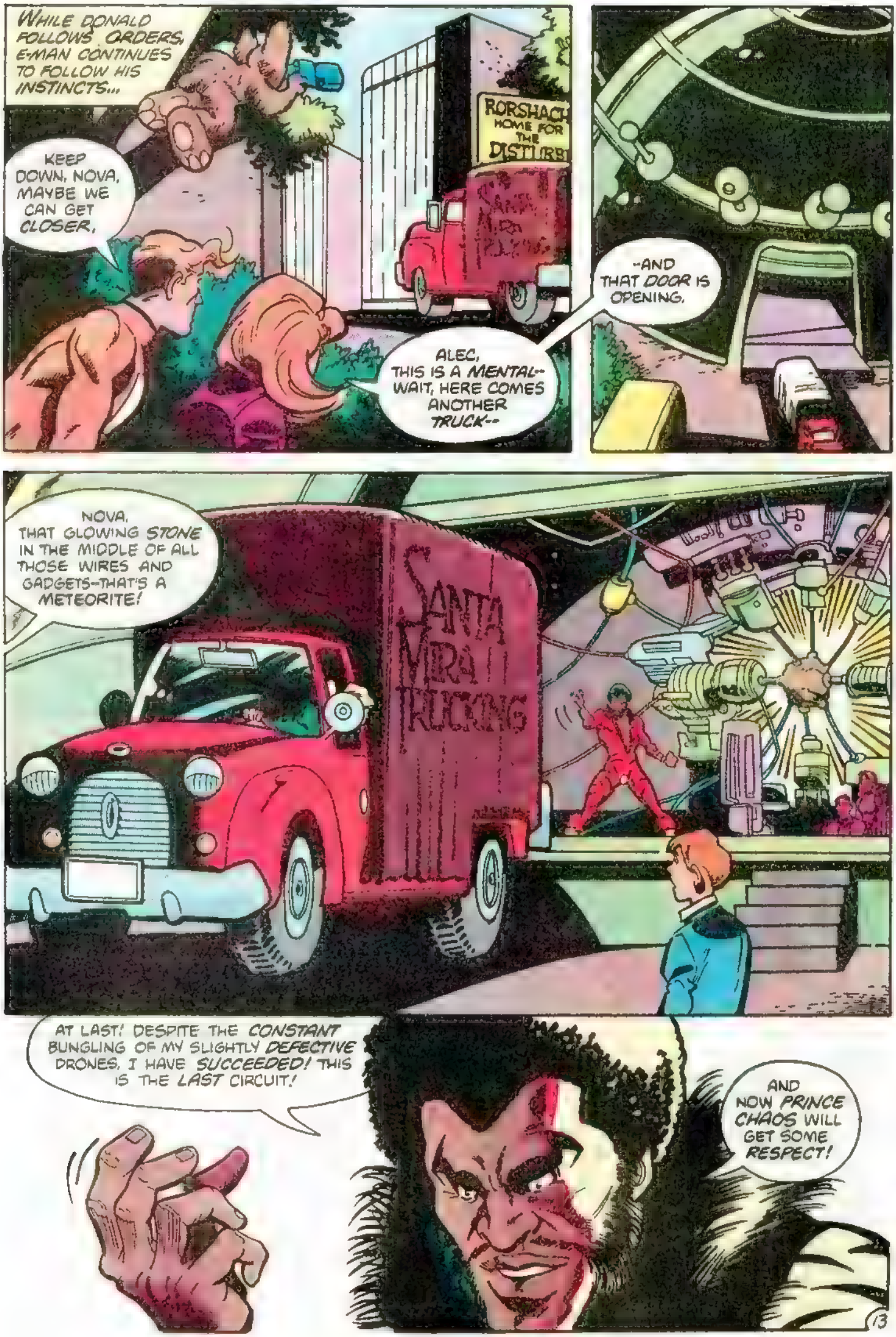
THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING, I WONDER IF I'LL EVER GET TO CHICAGO TO HOST MOPPET MONSTER MATINEE...
AND SPEAKING OF WHICH...
IT'S TIME ONCE AGAIN, FOR RANDARR THE INEXPLICABLE!
Sven, call home
OKAY, BOYS 'N' GIRLS, TODAY I'VE GOT ANOTHER REALLY GREAT TRICK FOR YOU!
THIS IS THE FAMOUS WATER ESCAPE I LEARNED FROM HARRY HOUDANKO..OR WAS IT JIM STERINI?
WHERE WAS I? OH YEAH! ANYWAY, I GET ALL TIED UP, AND THEN THEY DROP ME IN THE TANK, AND THEN COMES THE REALLY NEAT PART WHERE...
ZZZT!
ZZZAPPP
ZZT!
NOT AGAIN!
THAT TRICK NEVER WORKS
HE'S SHORTING THE CABLES! CUT THE POWER!
ZZZZZT!


AS MOPPET MONSTER MATINEE CUTS TO A COMMERCIAL, WE CUT BACK TO INDIANA...
WHERE'D HE GO? THERE AREN'T A WHOLE LOT OF PLACES TO—
AHH, THERE HE IS.
HE'S HEADING INTO THAT-- HOSPITAL?
IT'S TIME TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND...
Di-Dee Laundry
24-hr. service
MAC'S GARAGE
...HERE...
WHAT IS THAT THING?
THERE'S MORE TO ALL THIS THAN JUST AN AUTO PARTS THEFT.
BUT, TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT, I'VE GOT TO GET INSIDE THAT GUARDED BUILDING, SOOO...
KORSHAC HOME FO THE DISTURBE

DI-D
anch
ALL RIGHT, YOU'RE CLEARED TO GO IN.
E-MAN MOVES QUICKLY, HIS ENERGY SENSES EVER ALERT.
NO! NO! YOU CRETIN--
OH-HO! WHAT'S THIS?
--I SAID AUTOMATED CIRCUITS AND WIRES, NOT AUTO-MOTIVE PARTS AND TIRES!
OH WELL, I GUESS POET.C REVENGE HAS ITS PRICE--BUT THIS DOES SEEM EXCESSIVE!

IT WAS EASY ENOUGH TO GET OUT BY TURNING INTO ELECTRIC CURRENT AND FOLLOWING THE WIRES.
I GUESS I COULD HAVE JUST TAKEN THE JEEP PARTS AND BROUGHT THEM BACK TO THE GARAGE...
BUT THIS NEEDS SOME INVESTIGATING— AS MIKE WOULD SAY.
I'M BACK!
YOW!
GIVE A GIRL SOME WARNING, OK?
A FEW DETAILS LATER...
...AND THERE'S THIS WEIRD GUY IN RED LEOTARDS. I DON'T THINK HE'S A DOCTOR...
...AND THE PATIENTS WEREN'T TOO NORMAL, EITHER.
WELL, I HAVE TO GET MY JEEP BACK TOGETHER...
SO LET'S GO CHECK IT OUT!
SHORTLY...
SEE, NOVA, THAT STRUCTURE IN BACK.
HMMM! WE'LL HAVE TO GET A CLOSER LOOK.

MEANWHILE, 800 MILES EAST...
HMM, LIVERWURST, SOY SAUCE--
--YEAH, I DON'T NEED TRONN--
--WHERE'S THE ANCHOVIES?--
--I DON'T NEED NOBODY!
MAUSER DETECTIVE AGENCY
I GOT DONALD FER AN ASSISTANT NOW, ANYWAY.
HE EVEN WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL...
...LET'S SEE--PEANUT BUTTER, BLACK OLIVES...
RIGHT NOW, DONALD IS STAKIN' OUT THE APARTMENT OF RANDOLPH KAPINSKI--DELZELL'S BUSINESS PARTNER.
AHHH, BREAKFAST.
SLURP... CHOMP--
HI, UNCLE MICKEY. I STAKED OUT THE PLACE, JUST LIKE YOU SAID--AND MR. KAPINSKI LEFT AT EXACTLY 6:30 AND 15 SECONDS!
DON'T CALL ME MICKEY--
--SO WHERE'D HE GO?
GO? GEE, YOU DIDN'T TELL ME TO FOLLOW HIM.
GURRRP, ARGGGH!


WHILE DONALD FOLLOWS ORDERS, E-MAN CONTINUES TO FOLLOW HIS INSTINCTS...
KEEP DOWN, NOVA, MAYBE WE CAN GET CLOSER.
RORSHACH HOME FOR THE DISTURB
ALEC, THIS IS A MENTAL-- WAIT, HERE COMES ANOTHER TRUCK--
--AND THAT DOOR IS OPENING.
NOVA, THAT GLOWING STONE IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THOSE WIRES AND GADGETS--THAT'S A METEORITE!
SANTA MIRA TRUCKING
AT LAST! DESPITE THE CONSTANT BUNGLING OF MY SLIGHTLY DEFECTIVE DRONES, I HAVE SUCCEEDED! THIS IS THE LAST CIRCUIT!
AND NOW PRINCE CHAOS WILL GET SOME RESPECT!

YOU MINDLESS DERELICTS COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND, BUT ONLY MY INCREDIBLE INTELLECT COULD DEVISE THIS BRILLIANT SCHEME!
ONLY I COULD DISCOVER THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS METEORITE...
...AND REALIZE THE POWER IN ITS MIND-DEADENING RADIATION!
I WAS DISTRACTED FOR A TIME--*
BUT SOON I TRACKED THE METEOR THROUGH THE COSMOS...
* SEE RECENT ISSUES OF WARP. CHAOS HAS BEEN BUSY-MIKE.
...AND IN ONE OF LIFE'S LITTLE IRONIES, IT JUST HAPPENED TO CRASH TO EARTH, RIGHT HERE.
I GUESS IT REALLY IS A SMALL MULTI-VERSE AFTER ALL.
ANYWAY, I ATTACHED MY PATENTED DIRECTIONAL TUNING TRANSMITTER-AND ENTHRALLED ALL YOU INMATES AND THE LOCALS IN THE TOWN DOWN THE ROAD...
...AND HAD YOU BUILD MY INTER-STELLAR EXTRA-SENSORY AMPLIFIER FOR ME!
AS SOON AS I INSERT THE FINAL CIRCUIT BOARD, THE MIND-CONTROLLING RAYS WILL BLANKET THE EARTH...
...AND THEN THE SOLAR SYSTEM...AND SOON THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE!
THEN THEY'LL ALL HAVE TO WORSHIP ME AS THE GOD I TRULY AM!

ALEC, I FEEL KINDA FUNNY...
NOVA, WHAT--?
THAT RADIATION...
I REALLY SHOULD GO OVER THERE AND HELP MY FRIENDS.
AHHH, ANOTHER CONVERT! BUT WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?
SHE CAME WITH ME—AND SHES LEAVING WITH ME!
OH, NO, NOT ANOTHER BLONDE NICE GUY!
BUT ENOUGH IDLE CHIT-CHAT. CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY?

TWO CAN PLAY THAT GAME!
CAN'T YOU SUPER-BOZOS EVER MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS?
WHY AM I DOING THIS THE HARD WAY?
HEY, YOU- BEAUTIFUL AND VACANT...
MY DEAR GIRL, GO JUMP IN THE LAKE-AND DROWN!
DROWN MYSELF? YES, THAT WOULD BE NICE.
NOVA?
NOVA!!

THAT SHOULD KEEP THE HUMAN NIGHT-LITE OCCUPIED FOR A WHILE!
NOW, WHERE IS THAT CIRCUIT BOARD?
AH--!
NOVA! WAIT!!
NO TIME FOR THAT NOW-- I'VE GOT TO DROWN MYSELF!
NOT IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT!
NOTHING LEFT TO DO NOW BUT THROW THE SWITCH!
THERE'S ENOUGH POWER IN THIS BABY TO CONTROL ANYBODY-- EVEN THAT ORANGE ANNOYANCE!
WOULD YOU LET ME DOWN NOW, SO I CAN DROWN MYSELF?
STOP RIGHT THERE!

I SAID STOP!
GO AWAY GLOW-HEAD, YOU BOTHER ME!
COULD I PLEASE DROWN NOW?
LLAAAAP!
WHOOOM!!
MAYBE I CAN JUST SHORT THE SWITCH...
FINE, BUT I REALLY MUST BE GOING...
NICE TRY--BUT I'VE DEALT WITH ENERGY BLASTS BEFORE!
HEY! LOOK OUT!
OH-HO! DON'T WANT TO HARM INNOCENT BYSTANDERS, DO WE?
HEY, FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS!
A TRAGIC FLAW...

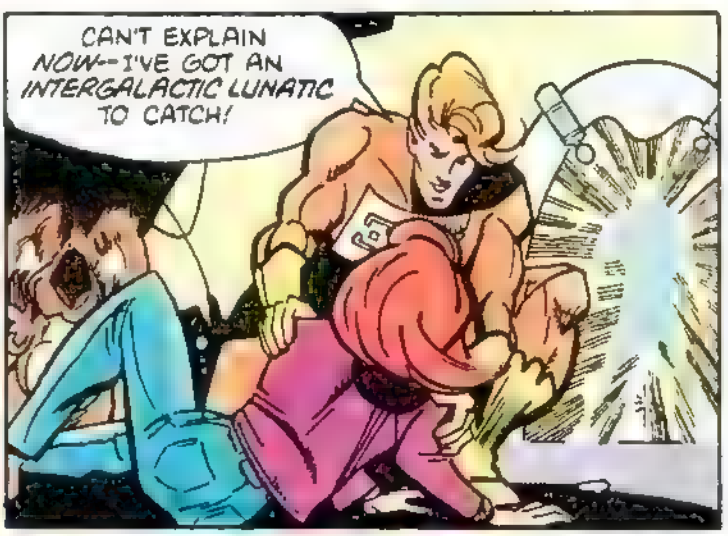
YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO INCINERATE MY WORSHIPFUL SLAVES, NOW WOULD YOU? SO WHILE YOU KIDS PLAY KICK-THE-SUPERHERO...
...I'LL THROW THIS SWITCH!
...MUST GO DROWN MYSELF...
?
?
!
ONE SMALL STEP FOR SUPERVILLAIN...
...AND ONE GIANT LEAP FOR GOD!

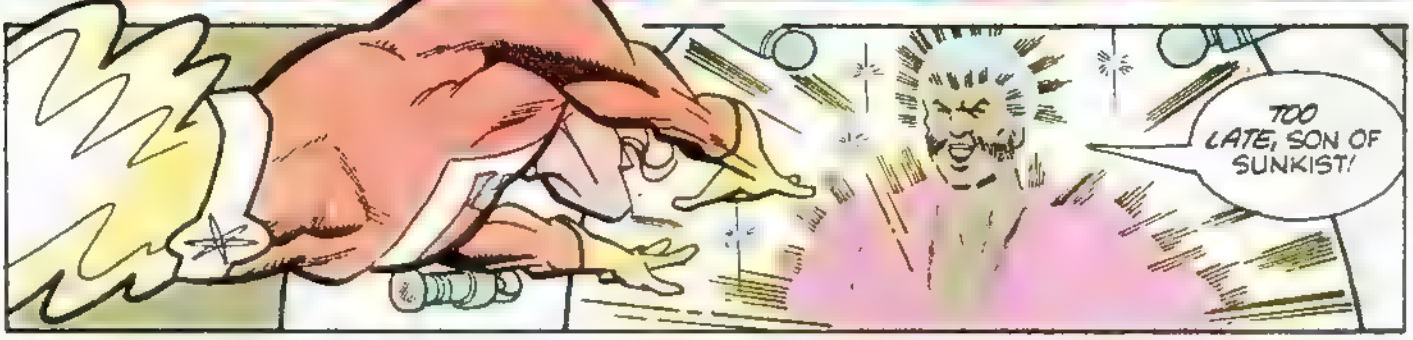
WHHRRRMM
WHRRRRM
VVRRMMB
HMMMMM
!
SPITT
SPITT
KKRRTK!
FLWPF!

THIS JUST ISN'T MY DAY.
THOSE MENTAL DEFECTIVES COULDN'T BE TRUSTED EVEN TO BUILD A SIMPLE COSMOS-SPANNING MIND-SUCKING MACHINE!
THEN WHY DID YOU PICK A MENTAL INSTITUTION IN THE FIRST PLACE?
IT WON'T TAKE LONG... JUST A SHORT WALK DOWN TO THE LAKE...
BECAUSE THIS PLACE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR UNLEASHING ONE OF THE NICEST GUYS IN THE UNIVERSE--*
"--AND I VOWED TO GET THEM FOR THAT!"
"AND, AFTER ALL, MY NAME IS CHAOS, PRINCE OF MADNESS!"
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE TO GET TO MY PORTABLE INTERDIMENSIONAL TRANSFER BOOTH!
WARD#1--MIKE.
"PORTABLE INTERDIMEN--?"

YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE WITH THAT METEORITE!
OW!
WHOOM!

ALEC--? WHA--?
WELCOME BACK.
BACK? WHERE HAVE I--?


CAN'T EXPLAIN NOW--I'VE GOT AN INTERGALACTIC LUNATIC TO CATCH!


TOO LATE, SON OF SUNKIST!

THERE IS A FLASHING OF DISTANT LIGHTS, A PECULIAR FEELING OF LIGHTNESS, A MASSIVE DISORIENTATION...

THE ORIGINS OF "INDEPENDENT" COMICS PART 3

by CHARLES MEYERSON

JACK KATZ is a hard man to reach. The only way I know to arrange an interview with him — aside from sending a letter to his post-office box — is to call Bud Plant, his publisher/distributor in California, and leave a message. But Katz is quick to call back. He apologizes for the secrecy, but he says it's the only way to protect his *magnum opus,* the 24-issue graphic novel *The First Kingdom.*

"It is unlike anything ever written. My wife and I keep all the original artwork in two vaults. I take the script out a book at a time. Whenever I go anywhere, we take with us whatever I have at the time. I'm sorry I'm paranoid about this.

"I ain't takin' a chance on anything: only one other person has seen (the unpublished issues), and his mind is totally blown. He goes around in a state of total stupefaction."

Katz will say no more about it, except to tell you about the theft of other creators' work and to mention "outrageous monsters in my past who have tried to steal the artwork legally."

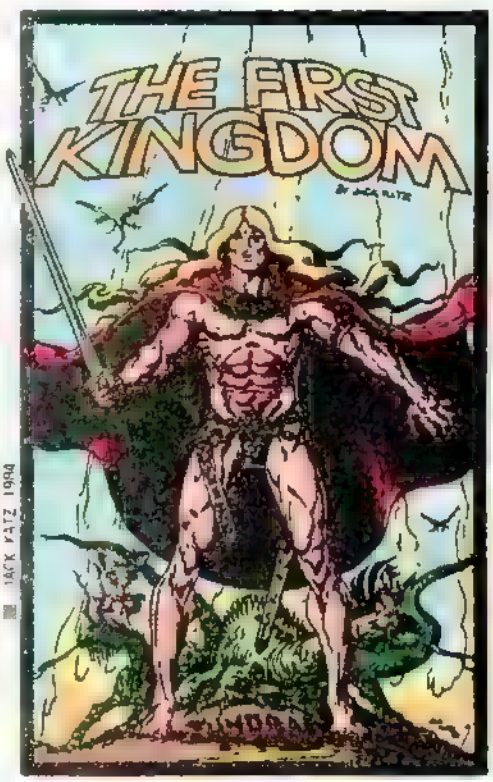
WHATEVER HIS REASONS for secrecy, at the age of 56, Jack Katz *is* responsible for a landmark in the history of independent comics. In extending "creators' rights" to mainstream artists, Katz was probably the first to go a step further: instead of showcasing the work of many, *The First Kingdom* put the vision of a single artist/writer on the direct-sales market. (Katz was among the first to use the phrase "graphic novel," although his work is more like what is now referred to as a "limited" or "maxi-" series.)

"I started in the business at 16. I drew 'Bulletman.' And 'Archie,' just after it started. I ghosted it in 1946. Then I got a job at King Features. I did everything. Also at that time — although nobody knows it — I worked on someone's comic strip." Whose? Again, the secrecy: "That will remain sacrosanct, because I was very fortunate, inasmuch as he gave me that chance.

"In 1951, I decided to go out on my own. I did many, many jobs until 1956, when I dropped out completely. Then, I did everything else: taught, sculpted — everything except drive a truck." Why not? "I could never concentrate; I started doing strange things like knicking people along the way and backing into other cars. I have a chauffeur: my wife."

BUT BY 1970, Katz was back in comics, over at Marvel. "I did a 'Sub-Mariner.' Stan Lee took out half the pages because he didn't like the story. I thought it was great." Katz did work for Warren and the short-lived Skywald companies, work which included the forerunners of *The First Kingdom.* But he believed comics weren't living up to their potential.

"Let's say motion pictures haven't been invented. It's Christmas, and your father brings home a package about 14 inches high, 12 inches across. It's a book. The cover is black, except it says 'King Kong: A Fully Illustrated Novel.' Can you imagine what an impact that would have?"



Katz had an idea he thought would work in that format. "Around 1947, after the atomic bomb had been dropped, I kept thinking, 'What would happen after a nuclear war?' I kept it in my head for many, many years. The regeneration of man after an atomic holocaust: most of the people are mutated; they live much longer because the pernicious rays of the sun do not eat into our skin as much; there's a continual dust in the atmosphere and that's why people go around fairly nude

"UNTIL THE UNDERGROUNDS came out, there was no way. Then, I said, if an underground can take a chance on this kind of material, surely one publisher might take a chance on *The First Kingdom.* I took Bud Plant the first seven pages. The artwork was very crude. Remember, I had to learn to draw again in 1969, after a 14 year layoff."

Bud Plant took the chance. "A damn courageous publisher," Katz says.

And since 1974, as of this writing, Bud Plant has published 18 issues — magazine-size, with color covers and black-and-white interiors.

It looks like science fiction, but Katz says it goes far beyond that. "I've done a lot of reading on psychology, sociology It talks about programming: why we need to program ourselves; why we cling so desperately to our bad habits; why, when a person does something very successful or very evil, he then goes about to destroy himself and his opportunity. That is the first 20 books."

He says the last four books represent much more. And he won't talk about them *at all* ... even to those interested in turning *The First Kingdom* into a movie "PARAMOUNT ASKED for the manuscript. I refused. We had a tug-of-war. Who the hell am I, an unknown writer, not to give them the manuscript? Why, can you imagine all the money they'd give me? They'd even have Farrah Fawcett play in this thing!

"Those morons didn't understand what this was all about. The only way you can get a serious idea across is to keep it secret until it has to come out. I would love to tell you; you'll have to read it.

"The fellow who did Mount Rushmore ended up penniless. I think he owed about $30,000. He said, 'I know those people on that mountain are as imperfect as myself. But they were the voice of a body of documents which said I didn't have to take the same job my father did and because I was born poor didn't mean God wanted me to be poor.' He had a purpose."

JACK KATZ HAS a purpose, too.

"I want to show the kids — the young artists today — they don't have to be afraid.

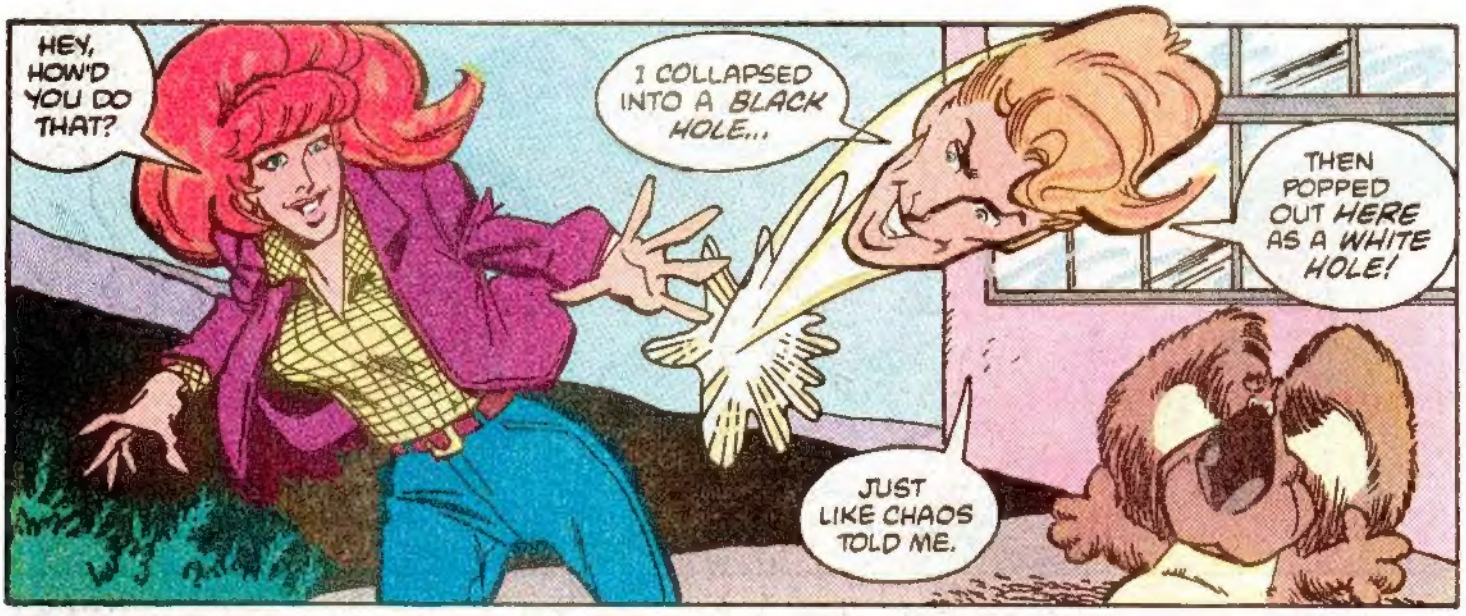
"They can express themselves. They don't have to put across mindless violence. Their precious lives, their ambitions, are very meaningful. They owe the legacy of their experience to the next generation ... and they should have the courage to do this. This is why I'm doing *The First Kingdom.*"

(Charlie, who spends most of his time reporting history-in-the-making for WXRT Radio (93.1 FM) in Chicago, wants to thank The New Fantasy Shop in Chicago and Rick's One-Stop Comics in Oak Park, IL, for their help this month.)

E-MAN KNOWS HE IS SOMEWHERE ELSE-- SOMEWHERE VERY ELSE.
WHA-? WHERE-?
YOU?
OH WELL, WELCOME TO CYNOSURE...
...IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT I CALL IT HOME.
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU CALL IT, I'VE GOT YOU NOW!
EASIER SAID THAN DONE...
AROUND HERE, THE LAWS OF PHYSICS ARE MORE LIKE SUGGESTIONS...

...AND IT WOULD APPEAR THAT WHAT WAS A JAIL CELL OVER THERE IS A TOASTER OVER HERE!
KLONG!
BUT A TOASTER CAN STILL POP!
AND I'LL TOAST YOUR BUNS!
SORRY, KIDDO--BUT ON THIS BLOCK, SCIENCE DOESN'T WORK AT ALL SO NO ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES!
SPFFTZ
IF SCIENCE DOESN'T WORK, MAYBE MAGIC WILL--
SMILE BAT NOSES
-AND DRAGONS ARE MAGICAL BEASTS!
24

OUCH!
HEY, WAIT A SEC, BUDDY--
--DOESN'T THIS STRIKE YOU AS A TAD FUTILE?
YOU TURN INTO DIFFERENT THINGS...
...AND I KEEP GOING PLACES WHERE THOSE THINGS WON'T WORK...
...AND EVEN IF YOU DO CATCH ME...
...WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO THEN?
I MEAN-- DO YOU HAVE EVEN A CLUE AS TO HOW TO GET HOME AGAIN?
UH--? ULP!
SO LET'S MAKE A DEAL.
I TELL YOU HOW TO GET BACK TO EARTH...
AND I STAY HERE, OUT OF YOUR HAIR, OKAY?
HOW DO I KNOW YOU WON'T COME BACK AND TRY THIS AGAIN?
TOO MANY OVER-EAGER SUPERHEROES THERE FOR MY LIKING!
SO, ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP TALKING, OR ARE YOU GOING TO LISTEN?

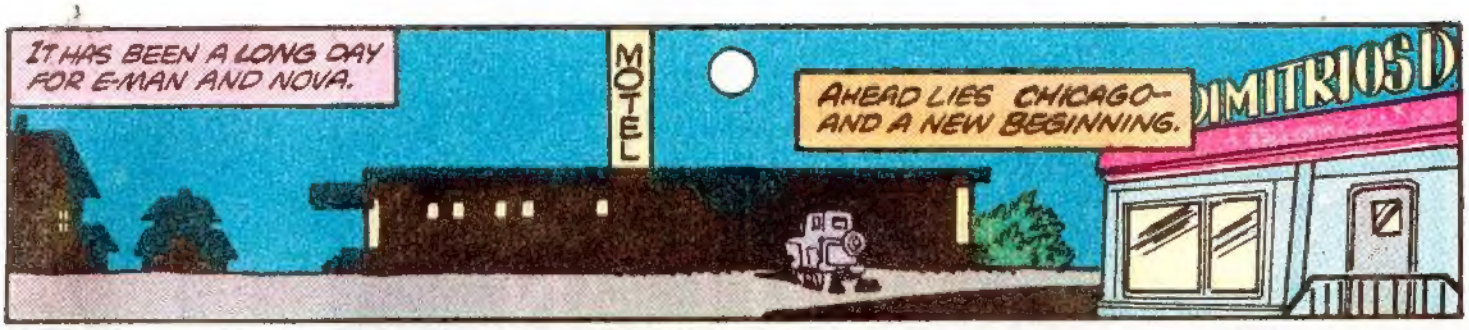

HEY, HOW'D YOU DO THAT?
I COLLAPSED INTO A BLACK HOLE...
THEN POPPED OUT HERE AS A WHITE HOLE!
JUST LIKE CHAOS TOLD ME.

YOU GOT THE JEEP BACK TOGETHER!
YEP. THE INMATES HELPED ME.

THEY'RE PRETTY MUCH BACK TO THEIR OLD SELVES NOW.
THEIR OWN... ER... IDIOSYNCRACIES... COMBINED WITH THE MIND-CONTROL METEOR MADE THEM SOMEWHAT ERRATIC AS ZOMBIES.

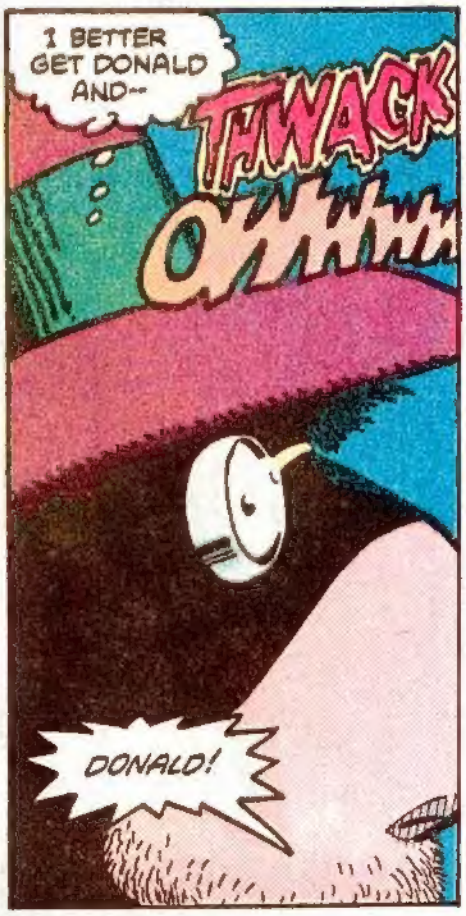
BUT THEY'RE BACK TO NORMAL NOW?
WELL, NOT EXACTLY...

THEY PUT THE STEERING WHEEL IN THE BACK SEAT--
--CLAIMED IT WAS SAFER BACK THERE.



AND PERHAPS AN ENDING AS WELL...
THEY CAN'T FIRE ME! NOT FOR SOME CHEAP REDHEAD!
I'LL BET IT'S A DYE JOB, ANYWAY.
MEGAMEDIA BROADCASTING
NOTICE OF TERMINATION
"RANDARR THE INEXPLICABLE"

LOOKIT THIS! I FIGURED DELZELL WAS INTA SOMETHING OUTTA HIS LEAGUE...
...AND, ACCORDIN' TO THIS, HE WAS SECRETLY WORKIN' FER SAMUEL BOAR!
BUT BOAR'S SUPPOSED TO BE IN PRISON.



NEXT ISSUE: Something old, something new, something BOAR, and RANDARR too!